

## The Latest Edition

Reclaiming Our Heritage

June 5-6!

Record crowd predicted!

IT'S FREE!

Park for nothing!

Parade - the big children's event at 10:30 a.m. Saturday!

Milwaukee - The culmination of a year's work will be evident at the two-day Reclaiming Our Heritage experience this weekend on the VA Medical Center grounds.

Hundreds of volunteers have put in thousands of hours for the third annual festival that recalls the early days of the historic Old Soldiers Home when thousands of citizens flocked to the scenic grounds. It was a park on the outskirts of Milwaukee before city parks evolved.

A one-of-kind, patriotic, red, white and blue extravaganza, the event presents a living history timeline in a historical place – colonial America to present day – and bears witness to the legacy of VA medical care.

One of the three original National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers authorized by legislation signed by President Lincoln shortly before his assigation, the Milwaukee grounds boast the most intact collection of historic buildings in the VA system.

Guided tours of the Ward Theater, Home Chapel and Old Main – the signature “Tower” visible from the freeway – will be available throughout the weekend.

Reclaiming Our Heritage also provides information on the full spectrum of present day services to our country's veterans.

Veterans are invited to take advantage of a recording studio to preserve their memories through the Veterans History Project.

VA staff is available to answer questions and assist with every facet of veteran benefit issues.

The event also includes exhibits of every military era, concerts, historical presentations, genealogical research and children's activities.

Guided tram tours and Saturday evening tours require tickets at a cost of \$5.

# 5000 WEST

★ ★ ★ PUBLISHED EVERY-SO-OFTEN ★ ★ ★

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Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Milwaukee Wisconsin

### VALUABLE COUPON

CUT THIS OUT - SAVE \$\$\$

Encampment Special!

Buy One  
Get One Free

Purchase a Pepsi product at the **Heritage Café** (south of Old Main) and get a second 16 ounce Pepsi product at no cost with coupon.

Buy some grub too!  
**OPEN FOR BREAKFAST**

**Good only June 5-6, 2004**

**Limit one coupon per customer.**

**No monetary value.  
May not be duplicated.**

## SPONSORED!

Reclaiming Our Heritage is sponsored by the Soldiers Home Foundation and hosted by the staff of the Milwaukee Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Proceeds benefit the restoration of the buildings in the historic Soldiers Home District.

## THERE IS MORE

Something for everyone!

Your friends are coming!  
If not, bring them!

For more information and a map, visit [www.soldiershome.org](http://www.soldiershome.org) or telephone 414 389-4135. A commemorative booklet will be sold at the event for \$5 and includes the Reclaiming Our Heritage schedule and map of the grounds.

## Victorian Wedding Bells ring Saturday!

Family missed original wedding!

Dress labeled “exquisite!”

Gifts of money requested for restoration of chapel!

Sue and Gary Giese have sent invitations to their closet friends and will hand them out to the thousands who will attend Reclaiming Our Heritage on Saturday.

It may not be a wedding but it is the next closest thing. “We are overjoyed at the opportunity to stand before our family and our extended family to renew our vows,” said Mrs. Giese. “The family missed our wedding 34 years ago. Now we have the joy of speaking our vows in a different century, a time we have come to know and love.”

The Gieses and many in their immediate family are members of the Historical TimeKeepers, a living history group portraying civilians during the Civil War.

“The Soldiers Home and, in particular, the chapel need to be preserved,” Mrs. Giese said with conviction. “It is our duty and privilege to call attention to the need to restore the chapel to its former grandeur. It is a work of art. We want to do our small part to return it to its intended use: weddings, funerals, christenings and anniversary celebrations.”

The Gieses' invitation reads: “The bride and groom respectfully request that all gifts be made in the form of cash or check payable to the Soldiers Home Foundation for the restoration of the chapel.”

Don Shawhan, an ordained minister and member of the 5th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, will officiate at the 3:30 p.m. ceremony on the south porch of the chapel.

The bride will be wearing a replica of an exquisite 1860's wedding dress being debuted at a fashion show before the ceremony. The dress was created by Terri Lee with the help of women across the nation.

History Unfolds for youth.

Civil War school day to explore the past!

Reclaiming Our Heritage opens a day earlier!

Over 300 students expected!

Friday – For the first time, Reclaiming Our Heritage is beginning one day earlier to allow elementary and middle school students experience camp life and Civil War history close and personal.

Also new will be the presentation of a Civil War Traveling Trunk, a special exhibit prepared and funded by the Friends of the National Parks-Gettysburg. The trunk will include everything from a pair of leather brogans (shoes) and a soldier's uniform, to a Civil War-era toothbrush, eating utensils and hardtack.

Reenacting groups include: the 29th U.S. Colored Troops, a Union Field Hospital, General Pettigrew's Brigade and a variety of civilians.

Presentations will focus on camp life, tours of an officer's quarters, camp cooking, civilian life and care of the wounded during and after the Civil War.

This event is a way to bring history to life, but it is also an opportunity for young people to spend time on one of the few remaining Civil War sites in the Milwaukee area.

## Field worship service slated for noon on Sunday.

Chaplain Oswald uses Jeep for an altar!

Sunday at noon, in the World War II area of the encampment, Medical Center Chaplain Norman Oswald will celebrate Mass in the true battlefield tradition. He will wear special vestments to give the camouflaged look. All are welcome.

## THEY SACRIFICED! WE CARE!

A candlelight memorial exhibit honoring those from Wisconsin who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will open at 8:30 p.m., Saturday in the chapel.



## Experience the life of African Americans in the Civil War.

At this year's event one group of living historians will tell the extraordinary story of Company F, 29th U.S. Colored Troops, a Civil War regiment comprised of free black men from the Upper Midwest.

In addition to participating the multi-era encampment, the troops will present, "A Mother's Child in the Civil War." This original skit is scheduled for Saturday at 12:30 p.m. in the main tent.

On Saturday night, Company F will honor members of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, one of the first African American regiments, in the Cemetery-by-Lantern tours.

Several members of the 54th are interred at the Wood National Cemetery.

## Listen to history unfold!

### The best of Civil War music plus more!

The sound of the fiddle, dulcimer, antique Civil War instruments and big band brass will bring history to life on the historic Medical Center grounds this weekend.

In addition to the parade at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, the event features music in its encampment areas representing most of the major eras of American history.

The First Brigade Band, one of the nation's premier Civil War bands, will march in the parade, perform a concert Saturday at 4 p.m. and play hymns in the Cemetery-by-Lantern Tours.

The music of the Nick Contorno Orchestra will be the highlight of a concert dedicated to WWII veterans beginning at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Music will fill the air by the Greendale Civic Band, Heritage Musick & Daunce Society, 5th Wisconsin Volunteers Field Music and Close Enuf.

## Staff members formed the 29th!

### Often a hidden chapter in history!

#### "We must not forget..."

Formed by employees of the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center after the first Reclaiming Our Heritage in 2002, Company F, 29th U.S. Colored Troops help unfold an often hidden chapter of American history.

The group's research has revealed that during the early days of the Civil War, free black men in the North were turned away when they tried to volunteer. They were told the Civil War was a "white man's war."

As Northern casualties mounted, attitudes changed. Some Union generals defied the congressional ban excluding blacks from serving, and, on their own, formed units of black fighting men. Eventually congress and President Lincoln allowed free black men from the North and former slaves from the South to join the Union Army and form the unit known as "United States Colored Troops."

Although men of color have fought in all of America's wars since the Revolution, the Civil War was the first to recognize the contribution of African Americans on the battlefield through a formal military chain of command. The African-American troops distinguished themselves in numerous battles in the second half of the Civil War.

Company F's mission includes "using authentic-styled uniforms and equipment, along with presentations, parades, drills, battles and camp life portrayals "to help the public become "aware of our unit's contribution and ponder what life might have been like for the black soldier during America's greatest trial."

"We must not forget," their mission statement continues, "the many battlefields that have been saturated with the blood of the Black American Manhood."

## History unfolds after dark.

### Looking for an excuse to go to the cemetery at night?

#### Would you like to see President Lincoln recount the Gettysburg Address?

Take yourself back to the Civil War with music of the First Brigade Band and an opportunity to pause as taps echo through the cool darkness.

Saturday evening visitors will be able to experience all this and more during the Cemetery-by-Lantern Tours of the Wood National Cemetery on the VA grounds.

During the tours, reenactors and family members will tell several of the "stories behind the stones."

The 45-minute tours start at 8:30 p.m. and run continuously until 11 p.m.

Trams will depart Old Main, the signature "Tower Building" in the heart of VA's historic district.

Tickets are \$5 and available at Old Main or by calling the Soldiers Home Foundation at 414 389-4135. Call early as tours fill quickly.

## Sunday features a tribute to D-Day!

### Contorno features music of the Big Band era!

Sunday will be a day-long tribute to World War II veterans and a commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of D-Day. The grounds open at 9 a.m. with breakfast and morning concert.

The music of the Nick Contorno Orchestra has been described as swinging, sizzling and sentimental. Under the direction of Nick Contorno, director of bands and orchestra at Marquette University, the band performs 1940s big band favorites and features some of the Midwest's finest swing musicians. Their performances will be the highlight saluting all WWII veterans beginning at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday in the main tent.

## Supporting our troops!

### Contribute to the list of needs!

In its first two years, Reclaiming Our Heritage relied heavily on the talent and enthusiasm of the 118th Medical Battalion located in Waukesha, WI. With the battalion's connection to the Medical Center, they taught the public about advances in field medical treatment in side-by-side demonstrations with Civil War medical reenactors. The unit also supplied first aid and support services.

Several members of the 118th are also on the Medical Center staff.

When the unit responded to the call to duty in Iraq, event planners decided to honor their service by helping families collect supplies. They also offered to set aside the Lake Wheeler pavilion as a reserved picnic area for all active military and their families during the event.

Their families are also welcome to march as honored guests in the Positively Patriotic Parade on Saturday at 10:30 a.m.

Reclaiming Our Heritage staff asks the community to contribute to the list of needs for the 118th. The listing can be found at [www.soldiershome.org](http://www.soldiershome.org) or at the event entry gates at any time during the weekend.

Children are invited to contribute their pennies, and all are welcome to purchase candles and yellow ribbons from the 118th booth near the pavilion.

### Fashion show to display the oldest in fashion!

Women expected to crowd main tent Saturday at 2:15 p.m.

With more than 200 yards of silk, sheer cotton muslin and reproduction fabrics, the collection includes gowns from the Revolutionary War, Regency and Romantic period and features several fashion styles of the Civil War era. You have to be there!



# 5000 West

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The community relations office publishes *5000 West* bi-weekly as a channel of communication for employees, volunteers, patients and friends. *5000 West* is committed to enhancing the image of the Medical Center and its employees and volunteers through information, recognition and entertainment.

Articles of interest are welcome. The editor reserves the right to use and edit contributed stories. Submission deadline is two days prior to publication. Your comments are encouraged and should be directed to editor (00Z) *5000 West*, VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI 53295: telephone (414) 382-5363 or (888) 469-6614, extension 45363 or e-mail [john.zewiske@med.va.gov](mailto:john.zewiske@med.va.gov)

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